

my heart (reads) for you by intergaylactic

Series: [elaborate coffeeshop au extravaganza \[1\]](#)

Category: IT (Movies - Muschietti), IT - Stephen King

Genre: Alternate Universe - Coffee Shops & Cafés, Alternate Universe - Modern Setting, Angst, Everyone Loves Mike Hanlon, Fluff, Fluff and Angst, M/M, Mike Hanlon Deserves Nice Things, Slow Burn, Youtube AU, and this is just Loving Mike Hanlon the fic, anyway i love my kids and want them to be happy, but that's life and i will regret nothing i'm sure lmao, but they're all interconnected lowkey, i am mike hanlon in this fic: about to go in way over my head, mike hanlon is my boy, so here's that, so i have no self control and also no common sense, so you can if u want, you don't have to read the other works in the series to get this one

Language: English

Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Mike Hanlon, Patricia Blum Uris, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris

Relationships: Bill Denbrough & Ben Hanscom, Bill Denbrough & Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough & Richie Tozier, Bill Denbrough/Mike Hanlon/Stamley Uris, Eddie Kaspbrak & Stanley Uris, Mike Hanlon & Eddie Kaspbrak

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Summary:

"Not sure why I was asked to do this, given my decided lack of rambunctious kids to feed every Tuesday night after soccer practice or PTA meetings to bring genuinely impressive snacks to, but here we are, and here I am, and here is how to make family-style fish tacos."

stan uris is famous on the internet for his deadpan humour and his

love of birds, as well as his pecan pie recipe, which is mythic among test kitchen employees. stan also harbours a continent-sized crush on one of his best friends and test kitchen coworkers.

mike hanlon began his culinary journey at a local arby's at the age of sixteen, and is now making his famous brownie recipe for all the world to see. he is charming, friendly, and falls in love more easily than eddie bangs his head on pantry shelves.

bill denbrough is an aspiring writer working part-time at Fran's coffeeshop to make ends meet while he works on his novels and runs a successful booktube channel called bookswithbigbill. two regulars have stumbled into his life now, and he doesn't want one of them (or his baked goods) to ever leave.

it's too bad he's locked in a blood feud with the other.

1. i didn't mean to / get your drink wrong / please don't murder me

“Hey, Stan, have you seen the peppercorns?!”

Stan's heart should not flutter when asked for peppercorn coordinates. He shouldn't get butterflies just because he didn't see Mike come back from his lunch break, and so doesn't have his composure ready. His Neutrally Talking To Mike, My Coworker voice isn't directly on hand, and his brain is already primed to set off a firework or two when Mike speaks to him, so Stan shouldn't really be panicking for the split second that he has to rethink Mike's question three times to understand it, but he does anyway.

“Stan?”

“They should - they should be above the dried florals,” Stan says, hoping Mike didn't catch his slight stumble. Mike would never say anything if he had, would never press for details or crowd him or pester him if he had; that's half the reason Stan likes Mike so much. But still, the idea of Mike noticing his stumble, even silently, is enough to make Stan panic for another nanoseconds. He has gotten good at compacting his anxiety like that: crushing it down into miniscule bites, tight moments of fright that leave him with more time to breathe normally and await the next panic.

“Thanks, man,” Mike says, coming out of the test kitchen pantry with the aforementioned peppercorns. He's making crispy sheet pan meatballs with salsa verde. Stan knows this because he almost always knows what Mike is cooking in the test kitchen; Mike likes to let him know in the morning, as the two of them are unpacking themselves at their desks, readying for the day of work ahead. He'll glance up and look at Stan and smile - the exact Mike-smile that leaves distinct little crinkles around his eyes - and go “I think today's the day for -”, and Stan will look right back and smile his own small smile, shrivelled and odd in comparison, and go “Sounds good.”

Stan shouldn't get so excited for that moment every morning, but he does anyway. He does a lot of things anyway.

"I'm going down to Fran's, did you want anything?" Eddie asks, and Stan jumps, just slightly.

But Eddie Kaspbrak is not like Mike, and would *absolutely* say something about Stan's weirdness.

"Jesus, you okay?" Eddie squints at him for a moment, and a slow, canary-eating smile unfurls across his face. Stan hates that smile more than his own. "You think I was somebody else?"

"No," Stan says curtly. "You're not nearly tall enough to be mistaken for anyone else, *Eds*."

Eddie's face falls flat, and he levels Stan with a glare. "I don't know why I offered to buy you coffee."

"Because I go on twitter to solve your problems - and I'll take a medium dark roast, black, thank you."

They stare at each other for a long moment, two glares locked in silent combat, before Eddie breaks and rolls his eyes. "Fine. I'll get your stupid coffee."

"Actually," Brad, the director of the majority of test kitchen series, cuts in, "I need to steal Eddie for a meeting about the next episode of Gourmet Makes, so *you* might have to get everyone's stupid coffee today, Uris."

Stan looks up at Brad with raised eyebrows. "Is that so?"

"Yep!" Brad grins. "I'll take a small medium roast, two creams, please and thanks."

Slowly, Stan pulls out his phone and opens his notes app, letting out a deep, long-suffering sigh. Eddie gives him a reassuring pat on the shoulder, though the gesture is undercut by the wicked glint in his eye.

"It's like Patty's told you, Stan, you just have to take a deep breath and be nice sometimes."

Stan glowers at Eddie before turning his eyes back on Brad. "I am

perfectly fucking nice.”

Stan Makes Family-Style Fish Tacos

[Stan Uris stands behind a long, polished countertop, immaculate in his black apron, not one honey-blonde curl out of place. He gives the camera a small, determined nod.]

“Welcome back to the BA test kitchen, where I’ll be making family-style fish tacos. Not sure why *I* was asked to do this, given my decided lack of rambunctious kids to feed every Tuesday night after soccer practice or PTA meetings to bring genuinely impressive snacks to, but here we are, and here I am, and here is how to make family-style fish tacos.”

[Cut to Stan chopping cilantro. Eddie peeks at the counter as he walks past and grimaces.]

“Ugh, god, I f***ing hate cilantro, f***ing soap leaves.”

[Stan responds without looking up from his cilantro.]

“Sorry Eddie, those of us with taste can’t relate.”

Bill has been working at Fran's for nearly a week and a half. His training shifts went without incident, even if he had to write codes for the different drinks on his forearm in sharpie to remember them (macchiato = espresso + milk foam, cappuccino = espresso + steamed milk + milk foam, flat white = espresso + steamed milk). He takes orders with a smile, writes legibly on the cups, and nearly did a decent latte heart the other day. Bill is coming along as a 7.5/10 barista, which Ben agrees with.

All of this burgeoning success is why Bill's third customer of his shift is such a terrible surprise.

It's around one thirty, and between rush hours; the coffeeshop is relatively quiet. Generally speaking, the only customers who drop in around this time, according to Ben, are regulars, particularly those from the neighbouring office buildings. Teen Vogue, GQ, Bon Appetit, Elle - there's a whole host of trendy magazines that have their headquarters based several hundred feet above Bill's work.

Bill is leaning against the counter, which his manager, Ellen, doesn't seem to mind; she isn't too much of a stickler for keeping up a "perfect employee image", and doesn't scold any of the baristas when they slouch or forget to smile or spell a name wrong. Ellen is cool, and Bill is relieved to have landed someone like her after his last retail manager.

The bell above the door dings, and Bill looks up to see a tall, curly-haired man striding purposefully over to the counter. He's dressed in a button-down and slacks, clearly very professional, though the shirt is made of a light, slightly glossy material, which Bill assumes must be fashionable Upstairs.

They lock eyes, and Bill chokes in his throat a bit. He's so drawn in by the man's sharp, hazel eyes, that he almost misses it when he starts to speak. "Hello."

"Hey," Bill recovers quickly, smiling. "What can I get for you?"

The man, reading off of his phone screen, lists five coffees. Bill rings them all through, and shoots the man another (charming) smile. "And what name can I put these under?"

The man glances around at the quiet shop, and the lack of other ordering customers, and raises an eyebrow at Bill. "Must you?"

Bill's smile tightens for a second, before he remembers that he is at work and that this is a customer who has access to yelp. So he tries to brighten his grin and nods. "Just in case anyone comes in - don't want anyone stealing your coffee."

The man's lips purse, as though he's thinking it over, before he says, "Stan."

Bill scrawls the name across each cup, and sets them up to be filled. "Alrighty, that'll be just a moment."

Stan just nods once, and looks back at his phone. Bill turns to the espresso machine, getting started on the cappuccino, and then pouring the two plain medium roasts. He adds cream to both, stirs them and snaps on their lids, and finishes up the other three drinks. He looks up at Stan as he slides the tray and fifth cup across the counter and says, "Stan?" with a joking smile.

Stan glances up, and notices the drinks. When he puts his phone away and picks them up, he barely looks at Bill. Maybe he's having a shitty day. Maybe he's tired. Maybe he's buying coffee for someone even ruder than him. Bill is trying to rationalize his behaviour when Stan freezes at the door, and snaps his head back to stare at him. Bill freezes, too, and stares back. Finding his voice - god, those fucking eyes - he asks, "Everything all good?"

Stan seems to deliberate for a moment before biting out, "I didn't order this."

"Hmm?" Bill frowns. "Which one?"

"The medium roast with cream," Stan says, voice flat as she walks back to the counter and sets his cup down in front of Bill, like he's presenting a dead mouse he found in the bathroom and not an

incorrect coffee order. "I ordered a dark roast, black."

"Oh, shit man, I'm so sorry - I'm kinda new," Bill apologizes, taking the coffee back and pulling out a new cup. "Medium dark roast, black, coming right up!"

Bill does feel some remorse as he makes Stan's actual coffee; he did make it wrong, after all. Stan is reacting to an actual mistake Bill made, and he hasn't raised his voice, which is what Bill had been afraid of when he turned around. He's waiting by the counter in stoic silence, though the pinch between his brows is bothering Bill.

Bill whirls around and holds out Stan's new coffee, smiling abashedly at him. "Sorry about that - did you want a muffin or something, on the house?" It sounds diplomatic enough to him.

But Stan shakes his head, accepting the coffee and taking a long sip. "No." Then he stalks right out of Fran's, the ceiling lights playing patterns on the back of his glossy shirt, the glare of his hazel eyes imprinted onto Bill's brain.

Bill stands there for a solid minute, before a girl who had been studying in the corner approaches him to order a refill. He goes on autopilot, fixing her a cappuccino, as he frets over the mysterious asshole called Stan. Bill just hopes he isn't a regular.

@billdenbro: customer service: i didn't mean to / get your drink wrong i promise / please don't murder me - a haiku by bill denbrough

@teanthings reply to @billdenbro: ugh what a vibe

@thebookoutlet reply to @billdenbro: dude we are so sorry, please don't die

@benhan reply to @billdenbro: oh mood, but god don't let it be a regular

@billdenbro reply to @benhan: idk and i'm scared to find out

2. sometimes people are just lactose intolerant, linda

Mike has agreed to get Stan and Eddie's coffees this morning. Definitely out of the goodness of his heart, and not because he wants to see the new barista at Fran's again. That would be ridiculous.

Walking up to the counter and thanking his lucky stars that he's working a shift right now, Mike flashes a bright smile. "Three medium cappuccinos, please. Almond milk in one of them."

Bill smiles back at him, and types in his order. "No problem. Also good morning."

Mike had decided the moment he first laid eyes on Bill that he didn't mind Josh, the previous barista, one bit. (He would miss Liza, but he would never tell Ben that.) Bill's blue eyes sparkle and he dots the 'i' in Mike's name adorably; Mike isn't sure how you dot an 'i' adorably, but somehow Bill manages to. He smiles and shines in the morning sunlight filtering through the coffeeshop windows, and takes a bit of Mike's breath away every time he sees him.

So, maybe he did volunteer to see Bill. Just partly.

"Oh, good morning!" Mike says, rolling his eyes at himself. "Sorry, it's deadline day. Everyone's a bit stressed."

"For the magazine?" Bill asks this as he's whipping up the cappuccinos, attention divided evenly between the drinks and Mike. "You guys have a deadline for the online articles?"

"No, the print issue," Mike explains. "Today's the day to submit the recipes and articles you want printed, and the writers that get selected are emailed by this weekend." If he sounds a little wistful, he has good reason: he's finalizing his article on reworking fast food to at-home, healthier comfort food, to be submitted by five pm this evening.

"Oh, nice. You sending anything in?" Bill slides the first two drinks across the counter, and Mike sticks them in a tray.

“Yeah,” Mike says, shrugging. “Just a small article, nothing big.”

“I’m sure it’s fantastic,” Bill assures him, smiling softly over the espresso machine. Mike feels his heart flutter, and smiles back. He accepts the third and final coffee, and slips it into the tray.

“Well, good luck with the article,” Bill says.

Mike nods his thanks, and gives Bill a little wave as he heads back out of Fran’s. “I’ll let you know if it makes it,” he calls, and Bill shoots him a thumbs up as he steps back outside. The June sunlight is radiant in the sky as Mike walks back to the office building, buoyant and brimming with hope. He can write this article. Bill wants to read it.

[A photo of a cream-coloured coffee cup, the word ‘Fran’s’ emblazoned on the side in cherry red. It’s held in a large, brown hand, in front of an enormous window with a view of downtown New York.]

21,344 likes

justmikeplease Fran’s rescuing me again on deadline day

eddiekaspbrak oh my god good luck with your submission, you’re gonna crush it

justmikeplease you’re sitting right next to me

eddiekaspbrak yeah but now you get double support

batestkitsch y'all are so cute w your regular coffee place and your friendship

Stan accepts his cappuccino from Mike, and gives it a suspicious sniff. "Almond milk?"

"That's what I ordered," Mike says with a shrug, taking a long sip of his own coffee, and handing Eddie his.

"Sometimes life doesn't give you what you ask it for," Stan mutters, taking a tentative sip of his drink. Almond milk. Barista Bill would live to see another day.

"Is that the mood of the day?" Eddie asks, watching Stan from his desk, face scrunched up in bewilderment.

"Yeah, is everything okay? Your submission going alright?" Mike is looking at Stan with significantly more concern than Eddie, and Stan feels a slight pang of guilt. He never likes making Mike worry about him, or about anything. Mike should get to be happy all the time, regardless of Stan's ensuing personal drama.

"Yeah, everything's fine, just a bit stressed," Stan says, waving off their concerned gazes. "You guys doing okay? Eddie, are you okay with your meeting tomorrow?"

Eddie's eyes narrow into a glare, and Stan is satisfied with Mike's attention redirected to him. He can handle a shitty new barista without any of his friends becoming too involved in the situation. All he has to do is get 'Bill' to make him the correct cup of coffee. That's

all.

He turns back to his article, which he's about 78% finished with. It's coming along nicely, and he takes a long sip of his coffee; it's absolutely, perfectly fine. Stan is just going to have to survive a new Fran's shake-up with the same resolution that he had last night when writing up this article.

TeaBR Tag (+ a brief Q&A)

[Bill Denbrough sits on his bed, fairy lights strung up around his headboard. He's clad in an oversized University of Maine t shirt, and is holding a mug of tea that says 'Mike Pence's Tears.' He grins at the camera, boyish as ever with his mussed auburn hair and bright blue eyes.]

"What's up everybody? It's Bill, and I'm back with a Q&A video, as well as the TeaBR Book Tag - I've got the questions right here on my phone, and also a steaming vat of *tea*."

[Bill holds up the mug, careful not to drop any tea. There's a glint in his eye that says he knows which mug he grabbed, and that it'll definitely be part of the video.]

"It's lady grey with lemon, by the way. So, I'm gonna be alternating - ugh, sorry - *alternating* between questions from the tag and questions from you guys. Here we go! Question One: what happened with that customer you wrote a haiku about, we want the tea?"

[Bill laughs, and takes a long sip of his tea. He smacks his lips obnoxiously, and then laughs again, this time at something off-camera. Cut to a new shot of Bill sitting on his bed, turning an amused look onto the camera.]

“Ben thinks I shouldn’t gossip about customers so much, but come on! Okay, all I’ll say, is he was kind of an asshole, but I made his drink wrong, so it’s at least fifty percent on me, okay? Okay. That’s it. Oh, but!”

[Bill exclaims this, and nearly (literally) spills the tea. He catches the mug just in time, and licks the escaped drops off of the side of his hand with a wink to, presumably, Ben.]

“Another guy came in recently, who I think works with the rude guy, and he’s super super nice, so it all evens out. He’s really . . . yeah.”

[Bill trails off, and smiles, though it looks to be to himself.]

“He’s somethin’.”

Bill hasn’t seen Stan the Asshole in five days, which has been a blessing. He’s worked the late evening shifts for four of those days, and had one off entirely, so that might have helped matters, but

nonetheless he has been temporarily freed from Stan's presence.

That is, until this morning.

Stan walks in with purpose, which seems to be how he always moves. (If Bill wasn't so worried about getting chewed out by him, he might say it's kind of sexy. But he is, so he doesn't.) He gets in line, and Bill can see him tapping around on his phone as he waits.

When Stan gets to the counter, he looks up at Bill and frowns. This is not a great sign, in Bill's humble opinion.

"Can I have a medium dark roast, black?" Stan asks this with such intent that Bill knows it's intentionally his previous order. He knows this because he remembers the order he fucked up, because it's been tugging at the back of his brain for five days.

So he just gives Stan a knowing half-smile and goes, "I don't know, can you?"

This is apparently not the right thing to say at all, because Stan levels Bill with a terrifying glare. "Only if you're willing to make it. That's generally how this works, in my experience."

Bill plasters a bright smile onto his face, even though he knows it looks fake, and rings the order through. Then he plucks up a cup and says, still smiling, "And the name?"

Stan must practice the single eyebrow raise in his bathroom mirror, because he does it perfectly. His lips are pursed, and Bill is reminded of their first meeting earlier that week. Maybe Stan the Asshole will never regain his status as simply 'Stan'. "You know my name."

"Oh, yeah, of course," Bill says, uncapping his sharpie and scribbling on the cup. "Your order will be ready in just a minute."

"Amazing," Stan says flatly, and moves to the side to wait for his drink. At least he seems to have enough manners to accomplish that much, Bill concedes. Doesn't make him less of a prat.

When Bill hands Stan his drink and says "Have a nice day", he doesn't wait for Stan to reply; he just moves right onto the next

customer, entirely ignoring Stan still standing by the counter. He sees him turn on his heel and stride out the door, and is grateful that Stan didn't check his cup before he left. With any luck, he won't come back, either.

"And what can I get you this morning?"

@thestanuris: Sometimes people are just lactose intolerant, Linda. They don't want any goddamn cream.

@bonappletea reply to @thestanuris: dude this struggle is so Real, like sometimes ppl don't mean to, but if i ask for almond milk it's so i don't die later

@urisbrownies reply to @thestanuris: omg did someone try to poison you???

@carlacannes reply to @thestanuris: honey, i will personally scold whoever has done this

@eddiek reply to @thestanuris: melodramatic b**ch

@thestanuris reply to @eddiek: You don't have to censor yourself here, you're not at work.

@eddiek reply to @thestanuris: but i'm sitting next to angela's office, it's instinct

Mike is unsure what exactly is wrong with Stan, but something is definitely bothering him. He's stalked to and from the pantry five times, just because he keeps forgetting spices he needs, and he's pacing more than usual as he stirs the batter in a bowl wedged in the crook of his arm.

Mike, by all accounts, probably shouldn't notice these things. Sure, there are obvious warning signs that any attentive friend would notice: Eddie rambling when he's anxious, or Stan's sudden clumsiness when he's overstressed. But there are small things about Stan that Mike notices anyway, minute details that he has collected over the years. It's like he has a mental scrapbook of Stan Uris. And maybe, under other circumstances, Mike would be okay admitting that he notices these things. He would be able to laugh it off, and not worry about Stan picking up on it.

But under these circumstances, Mike's noticing is directly related to his ridiculous, heart-thumping crush on Stan; hence why Mike doesn't want Stan to notice his noticing.

Stan is Mike's best friend. Eddie is a close second, and Mike loves him dearly, he really does, but Mike and Stan click in a deeper way than Mike does with Eddie. Mike and Stan balance each other: Mike is practically fearless, Stan is hesitant but willing to be brave with Mike. Stan is brilliantly organized and knows everything about anything, and Mike knows when to start acting (or cooking) just from the heart. They move almost instinctively around each other, always able to know the other's movements, and maybe that just comes with the territory of working in a kitchen together for five years, but Mike doesn't think so.

He would've acted on these feelings when he first met Stan, way back

in their first few months at the test kitchen. Stan had made everyone pecan pie, and Mike had made brownies, and Mike still remembers how much he laughed when Stan tried and failed to recreate his brownies.

“You just gotta feel how much of that you’re putting in,” Mike had said, as Stan measured out white and brown sugar.

Stan had scowled, and not looked up at Mike while he mixed. “Baking is a science, Michael.”

“Not always, *Stanley* .”

But Stan had been with Patty then - a beautiful, brilliant NYU student, getting her master’s in bioengineering. Stan and Patty had split amicably after a year - no one had ever heard the story behind the break-up, but no one had ever dared to bother Stan with the question - but Mike still hesitated. As much as bisexuals existed, Mike was almost certain Stan was straight. And so he hesitated, and hesitated some more, and eventually it had been four years and far too late for Mike to ask if Stan liked guys.

Now, he sits at his desk in the test kitchen, watching Stan pace with his bowl of batter, and wonders when will be the right time to ask him what’s wrong.

The answer to this question comes five minutes later, in the form of Stan tripping over absolutely nothing and dropping his entire bowl of batter onto the floor.

Mike leaps to his feet to help, grabbing a towel as he hurries over to Stan, who is scrambling to his feet, glaring down at the upside-down bowl and discarded whisk. Mike kneels down to right the bowl, and starts trying to wipe up the batter. “You okay?”

Stan and Mike look up at each other, and Mike should be used to how pretty Stan’s eyes are, but somehow never is. Stan is still glaring, but his expression softens to non-threatening frustration when he looks at Mike.

“I’m fine. I just - today has not been going well.”

“No?” Mike plops the filthy towel into the nearest sink, though there’s still batter smeared across the floor. “I think we’ll need the mop. What’s wrong?”

Stan’s gaze goes a little distant, and Mike watches him vanish from the moment for just a moment. He’s always done this so well: Stan can teleport elsewhere and then right back into the current moment in seconds, his mind moving a mile a minute as he disappears into his own world for a moment.

He returns, and his frown deepens into a scowl. “Started the day with a shitty coffee.”

Notes for the Chapter:

plot twist!!: bill is a witch who cursed stan and made him drop his batter using a magic curse lmao

also aaaahhhh i'm glad people are having fun with this fic <3 <3 i have so many ideas for it, and i hope y'all like a slow burn <3 <3

hmu on tumblr @ thatsjustfangtastic if you wanna chat/yell about these nerds lmao

Author's Note:

what's up, i've lost my mind and done this thing. there is a third companion fic coming, and this might kill me, but i am So Hyped. they all interconnect, but i wanted individual fics to fully flesh out and explore the various relationships as they develop over time. i adore these boys, and want to talk about them more lmao

hope everyone likes !! the updates will probably be around this long, just so i can update more frequently without dying, but yeah. this is a Thing i'm doing now. let's go !!!!

hmu on tumblr @thatsjustfangtastic if you wanna
chat/question my common sense or anything <3 <3

3. mike makes brownies (and baffles bill)

“I’ll take one iced mocha, and a Chaucer quote, please.”

Bill looks up at Bev with a flat stare, entirely unimpressed. “I don’t know Chaucer off the top of my head.”

“I just thought you were the fancy writer -”

“Is that what you think english majors do? Memorize Chaucer?”

“See, I never said english major,” Bev counters, pointing an accusing finger at Bill. “So that might be coming from a place of insecurity on your part.”

“Shut up,” Bill says, though he’s smiling too much for there to be much bite to it. He rings Bev through, and starts fixing her drink, all while she gripes about the July issue of the web magazine.

“It’s so new, so they’re lowkey looking for any reason to cut it if it doesn’t go over astronomically well,” she explains, accepting her coffee and taking a quick sip. “And my editor is breathing down the back of my neck over the feature for Eddie ever since the twitter bullshit went down. So now I’m just desperately trying to survive the month.”

Bill gives her a sympathetic grimace. “That sounds fucking awful.”

“It is,” Bev agrees, and nods over to her usual spot in the corner, taking another drink of her coffee; she seemed a little desperate to consume it as soon as possible. “I’m gonna go get started on the final outlines, cool?”

“Definitely cool,” Bill nods, giving her a thumbs up. “Go crush it.”

“You’re still such a dork,” Bev says with a snort, as she ruffles his hair before making her way over to her table. Bill flushes and reaches up to comb his hair back down with his fingers. Damn it, Bev, he has a reputation of coolness to uphold.

This reputation becomes significantly more important to him when

Mike from BA walks through the door of Fran's.

He's gorgeous, his soft brown skin glowing against the peach button down t shirt he's wearing. It's showing off his arms, and Bill is one hundred percent aware of this as Mike makes his way up to the counter. He flashes Bill a bright smile, and Bill has to clear his throat and recover his focus to say, "Morning."

"Morning," Mike says. "I'll just grab three medium dark roasts, two with cream, one with almond milk."

"No problem," Bill says with a smile, whipping out three medium cups and scrawling Mike's name on each. "Just tap whenever you're ready."

"Sure," Mike says, paying as Bill moves to pour his coffees. "So, I got an email from our print issue editor."

"Oh my god," Bill says, looking up at Mike with a grin. He can't help it; the excitement in Mike's voice is so contagious that his smile rises to his face, unbidden. "Did you get in?"

"I made the cut!" Mike confirms.

"In that case," Bill says, reaching into the pastry display case with a grand flourish, "This guy is on the house." He plucks out a chocolate chip muffin - fresh from the oven this morning - and presents it to Mike in a small paper bag.

"Oh, I can't, don't worry about it -" Mike begins, holding up his hands. But Bill pressed forward, placing the muffin next to the two coffees he's slid across the counter to Mike.

"It's a gift of congratulations for a highly valued customer," Bill says with a wink. He isn't sure where the wink comes from, but he decides his best course of action is just to run with it.

"Okay, okay," Mike says, giving him a grateful smile and tucking the muffin in the fourth, empty slot of his coffee tray. Bill hands Mike the final, almond milk coffee, and Mike's hand is as warm as Bill thought it would be when it brushes against his own.

"I'll see you around," Mike says with a nod, and heads back out; he glances over his shoulder before slipping out the door, and Bill hopes he catches the small wave he tosses him.

He sighs, small and happy to himself, and glances over at Bev, who is sitting at her table watching him with raised eyebrows and a devious grin. Bill doesn't like that expression one fucking bit.

"What?" He asks.

Bev shrugs, still looking like a canary who has all the cream in the world before her. "Oh, nothing. You're friendly with Mike, I see."

"I am - wait, how do you know Mike?"

"I know *everything*," Bev says, wiggling her fingers.

Bill just rolls his eyes, and silently hopes that isn't true - though from the look in her eye, it very well might be.

A Court of Mist and Fury Review (spoiler: bleh)

[Bill Denbrough is standing in the middle of his kitchen, holding a glass of wine, mid-review. He swirls it dramatically, and takes a long sip.]

"This is fanta and smirnoff ice."

[Cut to Bill, still pacing around his kitchen with his cursed drink. He

looks up at the camera and grins.]

“Okay, so the only thing I can say that’s truly, genuinely, *really* positive is probably that, like, Tarquin can kind of get it, you know? Like, tall, beautiful guys who are also super kind and sweet . . . I think I have a type. Do I have a type, Ben?”

[Ben Hanscom wanders into the kitchen, pouring himself a glass of water. He doesn’t look at the camera when he responds.]

“Yes.”

Mike, having delivered Eddie and Stan’s coffees, has moved into the testing phase of his altered tahini sauce. He’s pulling ingredients off shelves in the pantry when he hears Stan just outside splutter and say “Oh, really?”

“Everything okay?” Mike asks, sticking his head out of the pantry door.

Stan flinches, and shrugs at him, eyes slightly averted. He holds up his coffee cup, and frowns. “I don’t know - someone left you a note.”

Mike, confused, places his ingredients on the nearest counter before taking Stan’s coffee. Sure enough, on black sharpie are the words “a surprise for you under here :)” with an arrow pointing to the sleeve. He looks back up at Stan, who’s still frowning. “Sorry about that, they must’ve gotten the cups mixed up.”

“Yeah,” Stan says; he sounds a bit distant, and Mike feels his chest

tighten. "It's cool."

"I can just take the sleeve and -" Mike starts, but Stan waves him off.

"No, don't worry, I'm good. You like almond milk anyway, right?" He doesn't wait for an answer from Mike; he just moves back to his computer, and starts typing away at an email.

Mike, hesitant, peels the sleeve off of the cup, and reads the inside: "@billdenbro - i'll follow you back, i promise"

He feels himself blush, which is such a strange contrast to the unsteady feeling brewing in his stomach from seeing Stan so quietly upset, that he just picks up his ingredients and gets to work on his tahini sauce without another word. He doesn't know how to take Stan's distress over his flirting, though he wonders if it's because Stan knows the baristas are mostly men now at Fran's. Stan isn't homophobic, Mike knows that, but if he isn't comfortable with Mike being gay so openly at work . . . he doesn't know what to do with that. So he focuses on tahini sauce, and tries to forget about Stan and Bill for a little while.

@mikehanlon: currently reading 'the poet x', and uh wow. i was told it would hurt me, and it has. thanks @acevedowrites

@mikehanlonsbrownies reply to @mikehanlon: omg i fucking love poet x it's so gorgeous, i cried like four times

@bonappletea reply to @mikehanlon: it's been so long since you posted about a book!! i'm glad you're still reading my dude - you should totally check out 'on the come up' by angie thomas, it's got

rad poetry-ish stuff in it too

@lilahcook reply to @bonappletea: oh my god yes!! or the miseducation of cameron post, it's like right up your alley - and one of my favourite booktubers just did a rad analysis of it @billdenbro

“So, this hurt me.”

Mike drops his borrowed copy of *The Poet X* onto the counter at Fran's. Bill looks up from where he was doodling on a napkin and grins.

“Yeah? Good. It's supposed to hurt.”

“Is there nothing lighter?” Mike asks, though he's smiling through his dramatized complaints. Bill is smiling, too; they're both just smiling, like two idiots who apparently share books now.

“Hmm . . . that you would like? I don't know, everything you've mentioned is pretty dark,” Bill says, thinking. He isn't entirely teasing about that - Mike does seem to gravitate towards emotional, contemplative stories, reflecting on the human condition, which is an interesting taste for Mr Sunshine to have - but he still enjoys the eye roll he gets in response. Mike's eye rolls are so playful that Bill doesn't think they could feel hurtful even if he was trying to be.

“Like, a romance, or something?” Mike says, propping his elbows up on the counter. The coffeeshop is between rushes again (it's as though he times their meetings to be during these dead moments, which makes Bill's stomach flutter), so they can laugh and talk as long as they'd like for now.

“A romance?” Bill repeats.

“Or just something happy,” Mike says quickly, as though trying to prevent whatever teasing Bill was concocting. And, to be fair, he wasn’t *not* concocting any.

“Something happy. Maybe . . . Oh, Red White and Royal Blue is supposed to be good.”

“Supposed to be? You haven’t read it?”

“I haven’t read everything, Michael,” Bill retorts. “I’m a booktuber, not a supercomputer.”

“A booktuber,” Mike says, a sly grin creeping across his face; Bill doesn’t know how worried he should be. “. . . And a writer?”

“Oh my god.” Okay, so very worried is the right amount of worried he should have been. “Did Bev tell you? Or Ben?”

“Your twitter followers, actually,” Mike says. “They’ve been very helpful, very informative.”

“Why does it sound like you’ve been interrogating them?” Bill asks, though he is still somewhat nervous about this fun shift in conversation. His writing feels a little too unpolished for him to want Mike peeking in on it yet; he’s still in the phase of needing to impress Mike at all times, before they get to the endearingly embarrassing things about him. (Of which there are many, particularly ones Bev knows about. Bill is going to need to beg her not to share anything just yet. He’s already dreading it.)

“I swear I haven’t! People are just volunteering info, and some of your chapbooks were in the mix.”

“Oh my god, I haven’t thought about those shorts in, like, three years,” Bill groans. “They kind of suck. Please tell me they’re at least from the horror one, it’s not too bad.”

“Some of them, yeah,” Mike says. “I really liked the one about the werewolf short story that’s also, like, 50 First Dates?”

“Oh! Yeah, I actually - huh, I kinda like that one still.” Bill feels a sweep of relief: his horror/romcom mashup chapbook is one of his

favourite projects to this day. “But the others . . .?”

“I don’t think anything there was bad,” Mike says. The softness of his voice coaxes Bill to look up from his face-palm, and he is met with Mike’s warm, deep brown eyes, crinkled in a smile. “You’re really talented.”

“Oh.” Bill forgets how to breathe for a second before his brain switches back on again, and his cheeks burn. Damn his easily-flushed complexion.

Mike bites his lip, contemplative, before saying, “I’ve gotta get back to the test kitchen, or Eddie might literally kill me - I promised to help him taste test his new Gourmet Makes recipe. But it was nice seeing you. I’ll check that book out - then at least one of us will know if it’s good.”

“Nice seeing you,” Bill says, hand raised, as Mike leaves. He’s left alone in the coffeeshop, though he can sense the impending mid-afternoon rush, like a sixth sense. He lets the moment linger in the air before he starts cleaning down the bottom of the espresso machine, breathing in the magic Mike seems to leave in the air.

Nice seeing you .

Mike Makes Brownies - Bon Appetit Test Kitchen

[Mike Hanlon is melting the chocolate in a double-broiler on the stovetop, running a spatula along the bottom of the bowl frequently. He glances up at the camera and grins. He does this grin a lot in videos: bright, friendly, like he’s welcoming the audience into his apartment and asking them what tea they’d like.]

“If the double-broiler method is a little too elaborate for anyone, you can always heat up some heavy cream in the microwave - I usually do about a quarter cup for about thirty or so seconds, maybe forty if I’m feelin’ feisty - and then pour it over the chopped chocolate in a bowl, mixing all the while. That’ll melt it, too.”

[Stan Uris walks behind Mike, striding purposefully to the other end of the kitchen, his arms full of spice containers. He pauses just behind Mike, though, and snorts.]

“Too elaborate? Mike, people can usually get their hands on a second bowl. There’s no national bowl shortage.”

[Mike laughs, and nudges Stan with his elbow, still stirring his melting chocolate.]

“You don’t know what people have going on, don’t assume everyone’s got a second bowl - some people are one-bowl people. That’s just life.”

Bill squints at his laptop screen for a solid forty five seconds before letting out a bewildered “Wait, WHAT?”

Ben walks into the living room just then, and pauses, eyebrows raised at Bill. “Everything okay? Are you watching another weird Blue Planet segment about the deep sea?”

“What? No, no, god - did you know about this?” He flips his laptop around, finger jabbing at the screen where Stan the Asshole lingers in

the background, talking with Mike. *Laughing* with Mike.

“Know about what? That’s Stan, he works in the test kitchen,” Ben says with a shrug. “He used to come in with Mike and Eddie sometimes. I haven’t seen him in a . . . oh shit.” He stops, and his eyes narrow as he regards Bill. “He’s the asshole you complained about on twitter.”

“I - I didn’t say his *name* !” Bill protests, though it’s weak and he knows it. “He’s just - he’s such a dick - and Mike is so *nice* -”

“Yes, I know you think Mike is nice, but oh god, Bill.” Ben sighs, looking almost as harried as Bill feels. “What’re you gonna do?”

“I don’t know,” Bill admits, staring at the looming destructor of his happiness on screen. “I honestly don’t know.”

Notes for the Chapter:

okay so i haven't read acomaf in like two years so this is from what i vaguely remember about tarquin - he was so sunshiney in my memory lmao.

also the fourth chapter is nearly done, too, so that'll be up soon. i'm doing this bad boy in quick installments that will hopefully get to Proper Romantic Tension soon between everyone. the upcoming ba barbecue will probably help matters.

tysm for reading everybody!! <3 <3

Author's Note:

what's up, i've lost my mind and done this thing. there is a third companion fic coming, and this might kill me, but i am So Hyped. they all interconnect, but i wanted individual fics to fully flesh out and explore the various relationships as they develop over time. i adore these boys, and want to talk about them more lmao

hope everyone likes !! the updates will probably be

around this long, just so i can update more frequently without dying, but yeah. this is a Thing i'm doing now. let's go !!!!

hmu on tumblr @thatsjustfangtastic if you wanna chat/question my common sense or anything <3 <3